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Excursions in Number Theory (Oxford, publ. 1966; Dover reprint 1988) is a brief pleasure trip across the realm of number theory. C. Stanley Ogilvy's and John T. Anderson's enjoyable text only requires that readers have familiarity with algebra and have a penchant for puzzles. For those interested in more mathematics twenty pages of explanatory notes are found in the appendix.

Using carefully selected examples, the authors present key topics with surprisingly clarity. Although congruences (arithmetic, not geometric), Diophantine equations, and continued fractions may be unfamiliar, the reader rather quickly appreciates the critical roles played by these concepts and tools. For example, congruences prove to be exceedingly helpful in solving a wide range a numeric problems and also reappear in later discussions on irrationals, iterations, and Diophantine equations.

The study of prime numbers is fundamental to number theory, but as yet we have no known formula to produce all primes. Even more disturbing, we have no procedures that are even guaranteed to produce only primes (i.e., not yield an unpredictable mix of primes and composite numbers). There is something fundamental about primes that we seem not to understand. The short chapter, Prime Numbers as Leftover Scrap, offers a fascinating perspective that I have not encountered elsewhere.

Other chapters are more playful, offering curios, puzzles, and oddities. Some examples appear to be little more than amusing numeric coincidences while other oddities prove to have theoretical significance. I am not an avid fan of mathematical puzzles, but I thoroughly enjoyed these diversionary chapters.